



# MONTANA LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

## Legislative Fiscal Division

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Legislative Fiscal Analyst  
CLAYTON SCHENCK

DATE: February 24, 2004

TO: Legislative Finance Committee

FROM: Pamela Joehler, Senior Fiscal Analyst

RE: Status Report on Postsecondary Education Policy and Budget Subcommittee

The Postsecondary Education Policy and Budget Subcommittee (Subcommittee) is a subcommittee of the interim Education and Local Government Committee that is staffed by the Legislative Fiscal Division (LFD) and the Legislative Services Division. This status report is provided to the Legislative Finance Committee to inform committee members of LFD staff activities in regard to the Subcommittee.

## ORGANIZATION AND MEMBERSHIP

The Subcommittee met for the first time this interim in December 2003. Subcommittee members include Senator Greg Barkus, Chair, Representative Sue Dickenson, Vice Chair, Senator Debbie Shea, and Senator Don Ryan. Two Board of Regents members, Mark Semmens and John Mercer, are also members of the Subcommittee. A representative from the Governor's Office, David Gibson, Montana's Chief Business Officer, also serves on the Subcommittee.

## WORK SCOPE

The Subcommittee voted to explore ways for the Montana University System to take a greater leadership role in economic development for the state of Montana. Staff was directed to collaborate with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity and with legislative staff for the Economic Affairs Interim Committee to develop a proposal for a process to implement this idea.

In January 2004, the Subcommittee reviewed and approved the draft proposal for shared economic development leadership. (Note: The Montana Board of Regents and the Legislative Council also endorsed the concept of the draft proposal on January 15 and 16, 2004, respectively. The Governor gave her stamp of approval in February 2004.) The plan calls for a leadership group, comprised of leaders from the executive and legislative branches as well as education, business, and relevant organizations' leaders, that will provide oversight and direction for the project. A project team, consisting of people designated by the leadership group, will conduct the actual policy research and develop recommendations or options for review by the leadership

group. The Subcommittee, Economic Affairs Interim Committee, Legislative Council, Governor, and Board of Regents will also be periodically updated on the progress of this project.

The plan identifies six major initiative areas for further evaluation, including:

- o Improve access to 2-year and 4-year education
- o Improve and expand worker training
- o Increase technology transfer and research commercialization
- o Expand entrepreneurship and small business development
- o Promote better collaboration between the university system and the state of Montana
- o Use university resources to generate direct economic growth in Montana

Final recommendations from the Project Team regarding which initiatives to pursue, and the associated resource requirements, are expected in May 2004.

## **NEXT MEETING**

At the invitation of the regent members, the Subcommittee will meet with the Board of Regents one day prior to the regents' next regularly scheduled meeting in Dillon in late March 2004.

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